

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 EB-07

COME-00 DOTE-00 TRSE-00 FAA-00 XMB-04 /075 W

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R 272201Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 601

UNCLAS OTTAWA 3055

FOR EUR/CAN

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OGEN, CA

SUBJ: MEDIA REACTION CANADIAN PURCHASE LOCKHEED LRPA

REF: OTTAWA 3000 JULY 22, 1976

1. WRITING IN THE SOUTHAM PAPERS NATIONAL POLITICAL COLUMNIST CHARLES LYNCH DISCUSSED THE LOCKHEED AFFAIR IN A COMMENTARY DEVOTED MAINLY TO CANADIAN CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL DEXTRAZE: "DESPITE ALL THE DELAYS AND FRUSTATIONS HE HAS ENCOUNTERED, GENERAL DEXTRAZE INSISTS THE FEDERAL CABINET IS NOT ANTI-MILITARY, AND SAYS HIS PROPOSALS HAVE ALWAYS HAD A FAIR SHALE AT THE HANDS OF PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU.

"HE INCLUDES THE CELEBRATED MATTER OF THE LONG-RANGS PATROL AIRCRAFT, NOW SETTLED AFTER A NUMBER OF MISFIRES. AT NO TIME, SAYS DEXTRAZE, DID THE CABINET RENEGE ON ITS COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE A NEW PLANE FOR MARITIME COMMAND, AND AT NO TIME WAS IT SUGGESTED HE SETTLE FOR AN AIRCRAFT THAT WOULD BE INADEQUATE FOR THE BROAD LIST OF ASSIGNED TASKS.

"CRITICS MIGHT SCOFF AT THE ON-AGAIN, OFF-AGAIN WAY THE LOCKHEED AURORA EMERGED AS CANADA'S CHOICE, BUT DEXTRAZE IS SATISFIED THE FORCES ARE GETTING THE WORLD'S BEST PLANE FOR THE
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WORK, AT A REALISTIC PRICE, THOUGH HE WOULD HAVE LIKED IT SOONER.

"HE AGREES THAT THE AIRCRAFT WILL BE OVER-EQUIPPED FOR SOME OF THE SOVEREIGNTY AND SURVEILLANCE TASKS IT WILL BE CALLED UPON TO PERFORM - ON ARCTIC PATROL MISSIONS, FOR EXAMPLE, IT WILL BE CARRYING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF ANTI-SUBMARINE EQUIPMENT THAT WILL LIE IDLE.

"BUT HE INSISTS THE AURORA WILL BE ABLE TO GET THE ODD JOBS DONE ALONG WITH ITS PRIME ROLE, WHICH IS HUNTING SUBMARINES.

"AND HE FEELS HE HAS LEFT THE WAY CLEAR FOR HIS SUCCESSOR TO WIN APPROVAL FOR MEDIUM-RANGE PATROL AIRCRAFT THAT CAN DO THE INSHORE WORK AND THE ARCTIC PATROLS, WITH THE ABILITY TO TAKE OFF AND LAND IN TIGHT SPACES, WHICH THE AURORA LACKS.

"IN OTHER WORDS, HE ENVISAGES A PLACE IN THE ARMED FORCES FOR THE DE HAVILLAND DASH-7..."

2. MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE LOCKHEED ORION CONTRACT SIGNING HAS BEEN LIMITED FOR THE MOST PART TO FACTUAL NEWS REPORTING, BRIEF SUMMARIES OF THE CONTRACT PROVISIONS, AND TAKE-OUTS FROM DEFENSE MINISTER RICHARDSON'S PRESS CONFERENCE. THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW SUBSTANTIVE COMMENTARIES (SEE PARA 1 AND REFTTEL); BUT RELATIVE TO THE INTENSE MEDIA SPOTLIGHT FOCUSED ON THE ABORTIVE FIRST CONTRACT, THE ACTUAL SIGNING OF THE CONTRACT WAS COVERED IN A MATTER-OF-FACT, OBJECTIVE NEWS FASHION. PERHAPS, AS SUGGESTED, THIS WAS IN PART BECAUSE THE STRONG EMOTION ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ISSUE HAD BEEN VENTED PUBLICLY WEEKS EARLIER. PERHAPS, TOO, THE GOVERNMENT'S TIMING OF THE SIGNING WAS ORCHESTRATED AT A MOMENT WHEN THE PARLIAMENT WAS IN RECESS, CANADIANS WERE ON HOLIDAY, AND THE OLYMPIC GAMES WERE IN PROGRESS IN MONTREAL. THESE FACTORS DEFINITELY HAD A BEARING ON THE DEPTH AND STRENGTH OF MEDIA ATTENTION DEVOTED TO THE ISSUE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976OTTAWA03055
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760289-1180
From: OTTAWA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760718/aaaaapia.tel
Line Count: 95
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 OTTAWA 3000
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 APR 2004 by ThomasVJ>; APPROVED <27 DEC 2004 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MEDIA REACTION CANADIAN PURCHASE LOCKHEED LRPA
TAGS: OGEN, CA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006